GHOSTING

Ghosting seems a new, painful form of rejection to me, and part of something apocalyptic.

It all started when the teens of generation Z, or "zoomers" as we call them, born between 1990 and 2010, started to use the sad word "ghosted" for their break-up from Tyrone or Daisy. For no apparent reason whatsoever, Tyrone and Daisy stopped texting them, or unfriended them on *Facebook* or something. So disrespectful.

We called the zoomers snowflakes and crybabies, and thought not much else of it. A decade later and the zoomers were now also being ghosted by their employers, school admission officers, clients, hundreds of dates, old friends and complete strangers, and the other 499 influencers they followed on *Instagram*

this week alone. Ghosting became the new antisocial plague, a new painful nihilism sweeping through the City. It got so bad that even the unholy *New York Times* featured "Ghosting" in its 2019 cover story, saying that people were "cutting off all communication without explanation."

Had not our bewildering ignorance, or shall we say this unnaturally sudden and hideous extinction of the zoomers at the hands of the entire world it seemed, damaged something inside of them? Burned their sense of entitlement, perhaps? Wrecked their impossibly high expectations?

Popular Tyrone was still grinning from his *WhatsApp* picture, yes, but he grinned right through us, and was not answering our last twelve messages. Daisy, too, seemed apathetic and cold. She changed her profile picture to a cute Pomeranian, true, which brought her forty-seven new followers on *TikTok. B*ut she hasn't called me after our second date at Wendy's. Am I a nobody?

I am a proud generation X, born in 1975. I have no beef with the millennials or generation Y, born between 1980 and 2000. They are a bit smarter with computers. But these zoomers, they cause trouble. I wish I could say ghosting hasn't happened to me.

But the truth is, I got sucked into the fray and I am getting rejected really hard and all the time. People all around us are cutting ties or never reply to us, don't you see. They are still online. For whom? Are we not good enough for them? Is it contempt? Surely, they like the attention we give them. Apart from that precious stimulant called validation however, the real us means nothing to them.

Are the Tyrones and Daisies moving on to their next victims, I wonder? Should I too, man up and ghost some people I am in contact with? Wow, this is powerful. I feel it: A ghoster is in total control. A ghoster is invincible. He who cares the least, always wins, they say. I will cut all relations, before they can do it to me.

The zoomers were onto something bigger, however. I give them that. Something greater and far beyond what we called the decline of civilization. And it got more insidious than you think. A LOT MORE. Human relationships, not just between

the sexes, but also between parents and children, between the classes and races, and all loyalty to school and employment, have broken down.

Yes, a certain indifference and frigidity always befell the great anonymous cities like New York where there is no scarcity of Tyrones and Daisies. But this new indifference, this disinterest in real human beings, is unnatural, hostile and unstoppable.

It is no longer just the zoomers getting the silent treatment every day, being ignored, rejected and abandoned. The terror has caught up with us from generation Z to Y and X in a spectacularly short amount of time. That is because we all got competition. Competition from an unearthly parallel universe so vast and cruel and superior in speed and numbers, that very, very few of us are standing a realistic chance of survival.

In this parallel universe that is now superimposed on our lives, it is not the actual physical You and Me that are rejected, but our theoretical proposition in the form of 'If this was me, would you like me'. That digital Us in the internet... it isn't Us in person. It is a replica. A phantom. Not us. Never.

Before I gnaw on the terrifying aspects of a person's transformation and multiple identities in cyberspace, I need to clarify the rules I think distinguish this parallel universe: A person made of matter cannot enter digital space which is made of binary digits and electric charges. He or she needs to enter the internet or any other communication not as him or herself but as a stand-in, a fiction, a protocol or a program, a silly profile or, simply, a user. Let us call all these digital manifestations of us what the zoomers would have us to call them: ghosts.

Ghosts meet and greet each other in cyberspace at the speed of light and simultaneously in different places at the same time. This happens even whilst we, their owners and creators, are away or asleep.

Tim in Tokyo was 46 years old and lived in our Nakano-ku. He earned little money from his copy read for a Japanese paper. He was a pen-and-paper role playing gamer in his youth in Cornwall in England. After graduating from college,

he came to Japan and, so he confessed to me, quickly became addicted to manga and video games. He took on the roles of 360 karas or characters a year, had 5,000 friends on *Facebook* (the maximum), clicked and liked and followed tens of thousands of profiles, writers, gamers and toths, and he had on his desk a little booklet in which he kept the passwords and emails of over 850 pseudonyms and aliases. Those are called sock-puppets in the community, he explained. Admins hate them!

Tim was an internet shaman. He was obsessed with the Dark web, with meme magic and Lord Kek, the Egyptian god of Chaos. He told me about the dead internet theory, and about how some German hackers in 2016 found out that only 3% of humans get 90% of all internet traffic. Tim wrote thousands of comments on internet message boards, edited thousands of *Wikipedia* articles and *4Chan*, *Quora* and *Reddit* forums, every day and under various pseudonyms. As I recall him over the years we sporadically saw each other at the conbini, Tim had not a single real friend or indeed much of human contact. He already lived here when we arrived, single and alone. And single and alone he was when tragedy befell him.

But let us not digress. The zoomer generation in particular, but also the millennials before them, created a billion avatars, profiles or whatever go-to digital incarnations, and the more the better. I recall that before China required passports and phone numbers in 2012, each of us had at least 10, 20 or even 100 different email addresses and anonymous identities.

Primitive ghost farms first emerged in China. Those farms mimic human activities with computers. Up to a thousand cell-phones are strapped to wire-frames against the wall like bird cages, dialing and creating paid-for traffic for websites, writing fake *Amazon* reviews or artificially boosting the next Korean pop idol. We can duplicate and reduplicate artificial users, and make those ghosts mine digital coins, build cities and infrastructures, explore infinite artificial worlds and migrate anywhere.

These ghosts roam the planetary web. And mind you, that was before the G5 technology, which opened Pandora's box of all electric devices in the world

talking to each other. Physical distance or absence are no obstruction for ghost meetings. This happens, for example, when your latest mobile app, say *Instagram*, asks you to link your *Facebook* account: It's a ghost orgy!

In normal human society, time and distance limit us. That makes relationships divine and important. We must cherish them. In the cyberworld however, time and distance are irrelevant and human relationships are inapplicable. These are ghosts in the shell, machine spirits, artificial intelligence and soulless bots.

Two thousand of unsolicited love letters rejected? That's the very definition of madness. Send two billion more spam mails, as the *New York Times* does? that's the machine spirit!

When a postmodern company was hiring in the 80s, it would get five paper applications from local dudes. So management accepted one and typed four rejection letters.

Naturally, when tech companies like *Google* in 1998 used the latest technology, emails, they assumed at first that nothing had changed, that they still get their application-files from real-life dudes, so they tried to continue the time-honored and respectful tradition of sending out rejection letters. Only in 2000, there were not four but 40 rejection letters. And by 2010, there were 100,000 letters. And by 2020, there were over 3,000,000 rejection letters annually. You know what, fuck that letter. You are rejected *by default*!

So now, even if you are a really agreeable and interesting dude, companies really give a flying monkey. They are far more interested in the numbers that you've created. In fact, most humans are superfluous and irrelevant and replaceable any moment. We already got that lesson from Tyrone and Daisy. But ghosts... ghosts are just perfect. Ghosts boost performance and enhance our company's desirability.

The study of ghosts has now absolute priority at our most prestigious institutes of technology such as MIT in Cambridge Massachusetts. This is because ghosts

are weaving value out of nothing, which we aptly call crypto. It literally means hidden stuff!

That wasn't all. CEOs kept talking about it at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland and in their Rotary Clubs. They made the astonishing discovery that the same ghosts that applied at *Google* seemed to have also applied to other companies such as *Facebook* and *Amazon* and hundreds more, and simultaneously. And each and all those companies could now individually claim those numbers for themselves and book those ghosts as real applicants. What else can we use ghosts for? If we reject the same dude in automated fashion at all our universities bar one, that makes all of them look very competitive.

The ghosts are listening to more music than there are listeners on this planet, and more videos are watched by ghosts than there are living watchers.

Western politics will collapse. That is a mathematical certainty. See, democracy is Ancient Greek to computers. Every man gets exactly one vote? That makes no sense to power grids and electricity. In true unreality, ghosts get hundreds of thousands of votes each and every second. Like in a computer game.

On a regular day, Tim visits 400 websites and 1200 urls - distinctively unreal places, he insists. What we see on the desktop is just pixels. A facade. Tim runs a different identity in every window on one of his three screens, disguised by VPN, which is an encrypt code, simulating his point of entrance is Amsterdam or Dublin or Capetown. Without realizing it, we all visit 10 times that many urls involuntarily, because of the many Trojan horses, backdoor and spy software by hackers and governments, through subversive tracking or redirection software.

Tim owned nothing, was untidy and rarely left his tiny apaato, except to get cans of fruity beer from a nearby S*even-Eleven* conbini. Yet, in unreality he was a king, a fan, a loyal friend, a love interest, a reader, a follower, a whatever. Tim's ghosts multiplied and exist in a thousand forms and in different locations at the same time. And, yes, even though Tokyo Tim hated the *New* York "Fuck You" *Times*, the company spammed him with ads and mails to his various accounts and email boxes no less than 11,721 times. See that, he snorted, they do

it too. The bigger the corporation, the more ghosts. That is 11,721 rejections from me, ha! But computers do not learn that no means no. Never.

The zoomers tried to warn us. Barack Obama isn't the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed bodhisattva who follows 588,000 *Twitter* friends. The numbers are fake.

Tokyo Tim died age 51, just a while ago, from liver failure. His exhausted, used up body lay on his desk in his vault-sized Nakano apaato. The shaman trans-migrated into the Internet, data and memory, ethereal existence. Real humans rejected real Tim. No fake company or celebrity rejects a ghost. Ghost Tim is still following all those companies and celebrities and friends. They love him.

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